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ABSTRACT

This practicum report describes a counseling program established in the school setting for young children who have experienced parental divorce. Chapter I describes the Merrytown Energyville Regional School System, New Jersey, in which the program was established and notes the author's role and responsibilities. Chapter II presents the results of a survey conducted to establish the need for counseling services and identifies six causes for the lack of counseling services for children of divorced parents. A literature review on the effects of divorce focuses on three areas: psychological effects, school-related issues, and specific interventions. Chapter III states the goals and objectives for the practicum and describes the five systems of measurement (i.e., a pre- and post-counseling questionnaire, clinical impressions, parent and teacher comments, and attendance records) used to evaluate the divorce counseling program. Chapter IV summarizes three possible solutions to the lack of counseling services for children of divorced parents and details the eight group sessions conducted during the practicum. Chapter V highlights the results of the program in relation to the criteria established earlier. Conclusions, general recommendations, recommendations for dissemination of the results, and a reference list and brief bibliography are provided. The five appendices contain the survey instrument used in establishing the need counseling services, the pre- and post-counseling questionnaire for children, sample letters to parents or guardians, and a summary of the eight group activities. (KGB)

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# PRACTICUM REPORT

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Establishing a Group Counseling Program for Elementary School Children Who Have Experienced Parental Divorce

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

FEB 1 1985

# Establishing a Group Counseling Program for Elementary School Children Who Have Experienced Parental Divorce

by

Alan Goldstein

Cluster XV

A Practicum Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1985

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Alan E. Goldstein under the direction of the reviewer listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Early Childhood at Nova University.

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Date of Final Approval of Report

JoEllen Salce, Ph.D., Reviewer

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This author would like to thank the professional staff of the Merrytown-Energyville Regional School System for its cooperation in his endeavors. Gratitude is also extended to the involved children for simply being themselves.

To assist with confidentiality issues, the names Merrytown-Energyville, and Chalk Hills were invented as fictitious places. This practicum did in fact occur within the author's place of employment. The author may be contacted through the offices at Nova University.

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ABSTRACT

Establishing a Group Counseling Program for Elementary School Children Who Have Experienced Parental Divorce.
Goldstein, Alan E., 1985: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D. Program in Early Childhood. Descriptors: Young Children/Divorce/ Counseling/Group Counseling/School Counseling/Counseling Effectiveness.

This practicum addressed the need for counseling services in a school setting to be delivered to young children who have experienced parental divorce. A survey of the teaching staff as well as a review of the literature verified this need. The school all too often overly concentrated on the academic curriculum to the exclusion of the affective domain. This report describes one author's attempt to assist in promoting mental health services in the school.

The writer's goal was to establish a group counseling setting where the following objectives existed: 1) to resolve the students' feelings of possible self-blame stemming from being the cause of the divorce; 2) to help the students understand that others are experiencing similar feelings and situations; 3) to help the students gain a realistic picture of divorce without the typical exaggerations and misconceptions; and 4) to assist the students in learning new ways of coping with feelings and situations. An eight week group counseling program was implemented during the school day where the students met in a relaxed environment to share, discuss, and explore.

Five measures were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Attendance, parental comments, teacher comments, clinical impressions, and a pre- and posttest measure were employed. Only the pre- and posttest measure did not yield results in a positive direction.

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Description of Community, including Socio-Economic and Geographic Factors

Merrytown Township, New Jersey, lies in Monmouth County and consists of 30.85 square miles bounded by Middlesex County, Marlboro, Freehold, and Millstone Townships. Surrounded by Merrytown, is the small Borough of Energyville, which is about one square mile, Merrytown is about 49 miles from New York City and 55 miles from Philadelphia. Originally part of Freehold Township, Merrytown was founded in 1848. Energyville was founded in 1688 and separated from Merrytown in 1888. For purposes of easier reading, the word Merrytown will henceforth refer to both itself and Energyville.

The name Merrytown is derived from the Lenni Lenape Indian words "manel", for drinking, and "paune" for bread, or a good place to produce bread. The land is well suited for farming and there remain 300 farms in the area. However, farms are gradually disappearing to be replaced by housing developments as rural life becomes more suburban to support New York City commuters. The Route 9 corridor provides excellent transportation and is beginning to attract diversified industries such as New Jersey Bell, Bell Laboratories, Nestle, 3M, Prudential, and Washington Forge. Recreational and other services are being continually expanded to allow for very rapid growth in what is quickly becoming a "bedroom community".

Demographic data comes from the 1980 census (Merrytown, 1983). The population is 18,914 with 94%white and 6% black. 31.3% of the population is of school age. 52.3% are between the ages of 20-64. The per capita

income is $8,969 with a mean family income of $31,812. Fifty-six percent of the land is used for farming and 12.6% consists of single family residences which have risen to 5,874 units. The median value of the homes is $84,700. Net valuation is $595,720,443 with the 13th lowest tax rate in the county.

This early farm land became the turning point in the American Revolution as the Battle of Monmouth was fought here. A state park commemorates the site. During the battle, Molly Hays became the famous Molly Pitcher as she carried water to the troops. The Old Tennent Church, built in 1751, is a very historic landmark that served as a temporary hospital and later as a cemetery. It still has an active Presbyterian congregation. Other historical places include the Village Inn built in 1732 and soon to be restored, Cobb House, Millhurst Mills, and the Thompson Grove School built in 1848. The area also includes Raceway Park and the world famous Englishtown Auction Sales flea market.

The children of the Merrytown area are served by two school districts. The Freetown Regional High School District contains grades 9-12. The Merrytown-Energyville Regional School District contains kindergarten through grade 8. The latter district is where this writer has been employed for the past seven years. The district currently has approximately 3,200 students located in five schools. There are two schools with grades K-3, two with grades 4-6, and a middle school, grades 7 and 8. It is a high-powered academically oriented school system with a general "college" orientation and philosophy. Teacher turnover is very low and programs are constantly expanding to meet societal changes. The school that became the focus of this practicum was the Chalk Hills School. This school includes approximately 600 pupils in grades K-3.

## Writer's Roles and Responsibilities

The writer is a school psychologist who functions as one-third of a child study team that serves two and one-half schools encompassing grades K-8. The school psychologist is expected to make a psychological evaluation and analysis of the intellectual, social, and emotional development, as well as adaptive behavior of a student. This includes:a) interviewing the student's teacher; b) observation of the student; c)assessment of the following areas: 1) perceptual-motor functioning; 2) intelligence; 3) social development; 4) emotional development; and 5) adaptive behavior; and d) writing a psychological report. The school psychologist is also expected to help individual students develop a more realistic understanding of their problems and help strengthen their self-image. He also offers assistance to families by interpreting the children's problems and helping families understand their various strengths and weaknesses.

In addition to the individual responsibilities stated above, the school psychologist also serves as an integral team member. The child study team utilizes a multi-disciplinary approach to determine pupil eligibility for special education and related services. The author is expected to take part in the following activities: a) identification of students experiencing difficulty in learning; b) evaluation of referred students; c) classification of educationally handicapped students; d) coordinate the development of individual education programs for educationally handicapped students; e) consultant to classroom teachers and other staff members; f) management and administrative responsibilities; g) professional growth; h) professional competency; and i) contribution to total district wide effort.

This author sees himself as being an advocate for children. He

desires to impact upon the lives of children to guarantee that their lives are characterized by environments that will foster good mental health development. He also becomes involved in legal issues, legislative planning, and promoting the field of school psychology as being a vital force in the growth of children.

# CHAPTER II

## STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

### Problem Description

In the capacity of school psychologist, the author was frequently asked to intervene or consult in cases where children were performing below a previously obtained measure of "potential". Typically, a referral included statements such as "Johnny just cannot seem to concentrate", "Judy is angry on Monday mornings", "Joe used to be doing very well", or "Jennie just does not complete her assignemtns". Inevitably, even upon a cursory investigation of the matter, appeared the word divorce. In the writer's school district, the divorce rate has reached epidemic proportions. All school children have been affected, usually in an adverse manner, and this includes those children who are products of relatively happy marriages whose friends have witnessed a divorce.

The divorce rate has been rising. The N.J. Health Department (1982) reported that for every 100 marriages there were 50 divorces granted. NEA (1984) noted that children of divorce were apt to score lower on tests and be rated less favorably than their peers by their teachers. Allers (1980) pointed out that nearly 25% of the children living in our country reside with one parent who is divorced or with a parent who has remarried after divorce. Drake and Shellenberger (1980) stated that there are one and one-half million children under the age of 18 who are involved in marital dissolutions each year. The divorce rates of course vary across geographical areas, but the fact remains that a significant number of our school

children experience this stressful event.

"Mr. Goldstein, can you tell me why Bobby is now absent-minded?" "Why is Brenda so moody?" "I just cannot understand why Billy is always tired and disheveled in the morning." These were all quotes from real-life teachers describing real-life children. As one who considered himself a concerned individual, the author decided to make known the abundance of children having divorce-specific problems to the school administrators.

To the author's surprise, and this goes back about four years when he was a fledgling school psychologist, those people in charge told him that it was not really a problem. If an occasional problem emerged, it was not within the province of the school to do anything about it. The author, along with other interested school personnel, pursued a path over the four year period to obtain counseling services for the school children, especially in grades kindergarten through six, where there were no guidance counselors. The Summer of 1984 arrived and there were still no counseling services.

The lack of counseling, and the major impacts of the divorce rate upon children, impelled the author to take matters into his own hands in the effort to show the administration that the schools could effectively provide services for the children in question. Thus, the problem statement was that there were no counseling services available to the children of the Merrytown-Energyville Regional School District who had experienced a parental divorce. These services could be provided, especially in the face of the usually accompanying financial hardships.

## Problem Documentation

During the Fall of 1983, this writer was heard by the instructional council. This body consisted of teachers, administrators, and the superintendent of schools who met to discuss issues of importance to the school system. The writer was commissioned to design a survey to establish a need for general counseling services. (The need for divorce-specific counseling became an outgrowth of the survey.) The writer enthusiastically accomplished the task in April, 1984. A copy of the survey format appears in Appendix A.

The results of the survey were as follows. There were 63 respondents out of the approximately 100 teachers who were surveyed in four school buildings. The middle school was not included so as to avoid disparagement of the already existing guidance department. 188 students were identified as needing counseling. The top five observable problematical behaviors with the number of teacher responses are included in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey Results

| Number of Statement on Survey | Behavior | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | Doesn't follow directions | 120 |
| 14 | Can't seem to concertrate | 115 |
| 6 | Lacks motivation and interest | 108 |
| 5 | Lazy | 107 |
| 30 | Doesn't follow class rules | 99 |

The top five probable causes of the problematical behaviors are in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Results

| Number of Statement on Survey | Cause | Responses |
|---|---|---|
| 17 | Not sure | 41 |
| 7 | Overprotected | 37 |
| 9 | Divorce | 34 |
| 4 | Lack of home stimulation | 31 |
| 16 | Educational Handicap | 29 |

The survey results were presented to the instructional council, but there were no active reactions. After this author studied the results, he tried to isolate an area where he could have a meaningful impact. The problematical behaviors were primarily passive in nature. The teacher response of "not sure of the cause" pointed to a need for more diagnostic services which involved more personnel. The "overprotection" group was too hard to identify since parents would become rather defensive. The author thus narrowed his focus onto the divorce issue as a cause of behavior problems. It ranked second in terms of being an identifiable cause, the population of students was able to be located, and support could be garnered for the delivery of services.

Secondary documentation of the problem came from two sources. The local PTA made initial queries into another survey, this time using parents, to discover how large the perceived problem of divorce extended through the community. This group was trying to complete this project through the local government. Secondly, an extraordinary number of private practitioners were consistently contacting the author's office for records on various students. Many of the cases had involved divorces, and the therapists almost unanimously supported school-based programs to supplement their own personal counseling techniques.

## Causative Analysis

Six causes were identified to explain the lack of counseling services for children who had gone through a parental divorce. First, was the time restraints placed upon support personnel. The school district has employed two school psychologists for the 3,200 students. A very heavy emphasis has been placed upon the psychodiagnostic function as opposed to the counseling/consultant role. In addition, the school psychologists were members of the teachers' bargaining unit which restricts hours and salary allotments. A closely related factor is budget. With the passage of P.L. 94-142, there have been drastic increases in the amount of monies spent on special education and other support systems. Thus, it became difficult to justify one more expenditure to a public that has become more concerned about the so-called "normal or average" child.

Thirdly, was a lack of administrative sensitivity. A workshop was held last year by a recognized expert in the field, Dr. Ellen Drake, for administrators and child study team members. The focus of the questioning was child-centered for the team members and statistics-oriented for the other group. Mutual concerns did arise, especially over access to records. Stemming from the insensitivity came a fourth causal factor. This had to do with student scheduling, teacher scheduling, and space allocations. There was little in the way of flexibility to allow support service personnel consistent access to those students with special needs. Nor, was space provided to implement those services.

Those people who run the schools, namely the Board of Education, had different priorities, none of which reflected the need for counseling services. From this fifth causative factor came the sixth, namely, an educated public. People were generally not aware that schools can

and do provide counseling services for a specific target population. There were in fact several districts in the area that were already doing so, and doing it effectively. This was the key ingredient. If a service was effectively provided, people could spread the news and hopefully self-perpetuate the program.

## The Related Literature

For purposes of organization, this review will group the research studies into three categories. These will include general psychological effects of divorce, school related issues, and specific intervention articles

Psychological effects of divorce;

Wallerstein (1983) described six psychological tasks the child must go through after a parental divorce. First, is acknowledging the reality of the marital rupture where it is necessary to understand family and household changes and separate from frightening fantasies Most children can master this task within one year of the separation. Task two involves disengaging from parental conflict and distress, and resuming customary pursuits. The child needs to separate from the family disequilibrium and remove the crisis from its commanding position This is more difficult to achieve, and if not done within one and one-half years, might not be accomplished. Third, comes resolution of loss. This is the single most difficult chore imposed be divorce and often takes many years. The fourth task is resolving anger and self-blame. This tends to disappear with time and maturity. Fifth, is accepting the permanence of the divorce which seems to be related to developmental levels. Finally, comes achieving realistic hope regarding relationships which mainly concerns adolescents and young adults

Kessler (1977) also talked in terms of stages as the child moves through disillusionment, erosion, detachment, physical separation, mourning, eventual adolescence, and hard work. Fetsch and Surdam (1981) later used these stages to establish group counseling sessions for older children, Cantor (1979) also noted that there are damaging psychological effects being created before the divorce even occurs as the child is exposed to the marital disharmony.

Two authors, while acknowledging the bad effects, pointed out some conflicting data. Lamb(1977) offered two conclusions. First is that the children of divorced parents are "at risk" for psychological damage. However, it is not possible to specify the effects of divorce because of the highly variable ensuing events. Divorce can actually be helpful as it terminates hostilities and uncertainties. On the other hand, the severance of important relationships can lead to emotional harm. Magrab (1978) continued along these lines pointing out that the effects of divorce cannot be viewed in a solitary manner. One must allow for the circumstances surrounding the divorce as well as the age, sex, and personality traits of the child.

In the effort to resolve the conflicting data, longitudinal studies appeared and continue to evolve. Kelly and Wallerstein (1976b, 1977) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1975, 1980a, 1980b) have been the most widely cited authors in the field. They have investigated a large sample of youngsters from different age groups to measure the immediate and long-term effects of divorce. Their original study was based on a sample of 131 children, aged 2-18, from 60 divorced families in California. The immediate emotional and behavioral changes by age group are as follows:

Table 3: Immediate Effects of Divorce

| Age | Behavior |
|---|---|
| 2 1/2- 3 1/4 | Regressive |
| 3 3/4- 4 3/4 | Irritable, aggressive, self-blame, bewildered |
| 5-6 | Anxiety, aggressive |
| 7-8 | Sadness, grieving, fantasies of responsibility, anger, and loyalty to both parents |
| 9-10 | Loss, rejection, shame, anger, loyalty conflicts |
| 11+ | Sadness, shame, anxiety about future, worry, withdrawal, detachment from parents |

After five years, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980b) followed up most of their original sample and were able to identify seven factors that determined eventual adjustment. These factors were: 1) parents' ability to resolve post- divorce conflict; 2) ability of custodial parent to resume good parenting; 3) abiiity of noncustodial parent to have a good relationship with the child; 4) ability of the child to developmentally create new coping skills; 5) ability of the child to use support systems; 6) lessening of angry responses of the child; and 7) age and sex of the child. In general, girls adjusted better than boys especially during the latency (age 7-9) period.

To further update and to correct methodological problems, Guidubaldi et al. (1983) embarked upon a study using school psychologists around the country to recruit subjects and obtain data. Several factors as being significant to adjustment were isolated in the earliest analyses of his data ( the study is still in progress). A major finding was that boys from divorced families were found to experience greater behavioral, social, and academic difficulties in comparison to both girls from divorced families and boys from intact families. However, boys who did have regular contact with their father, performed better on several measures. Another interesting finding was that socioeconomic status was <u>not</u> a factor in adjustment to divorce even though it was expected because of the additional financial stressors. The children who made good adjustments had earlier and regular bedtimes, watched less TV, had more organized after school activities, and had more contact with the noncustodial parent.

Standardized divorce-specific assessment devices have not been developed. There is only one study (Kelly and Berg, 1978) that refers directly to the measurement of children's reactions This assessment

system consists of three phases. First, is a history to gather information on developmental achievements. Second, is an exploration of the child's understanding of divorce. Finally, is a determination of what support systems are available. Other authors refer to this system, but none have further developed it to the point of standardization.

This section of the review has yielded the following information. Divorce does have an immediate impact upon a child's emotional adjustment. The duration and intensity of this impact depends upon several variables that were identified above. There have been no standardized measurement techniques. Researchers have relied upon observations and interviews.

School related issues:

Allers (1980, 1982) takes the stand that divorce leads to a high degree of stress, and that this stress will certainly lead to changes in a child's behavior and ability to perform in the classroom. He tries to answer the question of "why should schools get involved?" As divorce becomes a socially acceptable way of life, he states that schools must allow for this societal change and make certain accomodations for a child who has experienced such an event. Teachers are placed in the unique position of being able to identify problems, hold parent conferences, talk to the child, teach children to express their feelings, keep literature available, show interest and concern, and encourage the use of professional help. Kennedy (1980) takes an opposite view stating that helping children through a family crisis such as divorce is a personal area that is out of the domain of the school. His view is however in the minority group.

When the schools get involved with divorce issues, values emerge as a serious concern. Bledsoe (1978) addressed this concern via asking schools

to teach values in general to allow the children of divorce to express themselves. During times of a values crisis, teachers can offer both practical and emotional support. Children should be allowed to express their values, but can also be guided in appropriate directions.

Kelly and Wallerstein (1979) addressed the school setting with another of their research studies. They found in-school responses to be related to developmental level, uniqueness of personality, and levels of parental conflict. Teachers reported that two-thirds of the sample showed changes in school behavior. These changes included lowered achievement, restless behavior, daydreaming, problems in concentration, and sadness. The children also sought out the teacher for more personal attention and tended to remain in close physical proximity.

Why should the school get involved? Drake (1979, 1981) offered several reasons after remarking on the paucity of good research in the area of schools and children of divorce. Children are involved with the school for about 1/3 of their waking hours. Schools are constants in a time of very rapid change especially if the custodial parent does not relocate. Teachers can provide support since the parent is often attending to restructuring his/her own life. Schools can make services readily available since the child is already there and is naturally exposed to different support personnel.

What should the school do? Burns and Brassard (1982) call for the school psychologist to become involved in behavioral assessment, evaluation of support systems, counseling groups, bibliotherapy, parent education, in-servicing teachers, and referrals to other agencies. Drake and Shellenberger (1981) distinguished between direct, indirect, and preventive approaches for school psychologists. Direct approaches include

individual and group counseling and social awareness lectures. Indirect approaches include training programs for teachers, administrators, counselors, nurses, and special service personnel to heighten sensitivity. Others are referrals to parent training groups, being an advocate for school policy allowing increased single-parent involvement in their child's education, and becoming aware of relevant legislation. Preventive approaches include working with children of intact homes by developing affective programs throughout the school curriculum.

In sum, the few articles that have appeared on the school's role with divorce issues, have generally pointed to a need for services. Some delivery models have been proposed, but none have been effectively evaluated. The evaluation process becomes difficult, because in order to establish a control group, children would probably have to be deprived of services.

Specific interventions:

The review of the literature yielded only articles dealing with directive group interventions. No good data has been published on either indirect or preventive measures. Seven reports of group counseling sessions are presented here. None contained evaluative criteria other than student and parent feedback, nor did they contain any psychological theory as underpinning. Schneider (1984b) developed a group based upon loss, disorganization, and reorganization directing the children through these three stages. Mclallen et al. (1984) discussed their groups in terms of allowing youngsters to express emotional stress. They emphasized to be careful in allowing for situational factors when planning for elementary students vs secondary students. Cantor (1977) suggested a situational/transition group to provide emotional support, catharsis, and sharing of information. Hammond (1981) described a highly structured

group using activities to enhance self-disclosure and use counselor modeling. Green (1978) advocated a multimodal approach using the acronym "HE[illegible] to deal with health, emotions, learning, personal relationships, need-to-know, and guidance of actions, behaviors, and consequences. Wilkinson and Bleck (1977) also established a structured group format using "games" and activities to provide support. Finally, Guerney and Jordan (1979) discussed a community support group using volunteers trained by counseling professionals. This was a non-clinical rap session approach. They did attempt to evaluate it through semi-structured interviews.

One article has been published (Snyder, 1984) that attempted to evaluate divorce groups under carefully controlled conditions using a control group and good statistical analyses. The treatment and control groups were compared on measures of self-concept, school behaviors, and attitudes to parental divorce. Post-test data yielded no significant differences on any of the measures which she likened to other group therapy, not necessarily related to divorce.

Two reports were located that did provide underlying psychological theory to divorce-specific group work. Sonnenshein and Baird (1980) established a group using a Piagetian model. They stated that groups are laden with egocentrism as listeners will generally pay only scant attention to a speaker who is immersed in his/her feelings. Group interactions are often reduced to telling "war stories". Children seek self-affirmation through their peer group relationships. Thus, they planned a group based on concrete operational levels where insight could be gained by interacting the conceptual and the concrete. "The counselor strives to anchor ideas to concrete stimuli. This helps the children to "see" the point and makes sessions more cognitively valuable" (p. 90).

Schneider (1984a) posed an Adlerian model of adjustment. Here children are directed to be moving from a minus to a plus position and have to reorganize their lives. The goal of Adlerian therapy with children is to "encourage problem-solving skills in an effort to help the child establish a sense of place as well as workable means to gaining task related internal and external validation" (p. 17). The children will be able to gain social acceptance based on the common grounds of divorce. They will slo see models for alternatives, coping skills, and perceptions. The therapist evaluates the extent of disorganization and redirects the group members back to a sense of belonging.

In sum, there have been several group counseling studies that reported on various approaches to helping children. Evaluation was poor for lack of control groups. Theoretical backgrounds have been lacking. However, more recent investigations are recognizing these deficits and are attempting to correct them.

The literature review, even though most studies did not use statistical data, does support the notions that divorce leads to immediate psychological problems, that schools should be involved in the healing process, and that interventions , especially group counseling, can be carried out within the schools.

Let me conclude this section by reciting a student's poem that appeared in a School Psychologist Communique' (date not available).

Divorce

They said, "Enter the room." I sat.
They said, "We're not happy." I cringed.
They said, "We're getting a divorce." I begged.
They said, "I'm leaving tomorrow." I grabbed.
They said, "Who are you going with?" I shrugged.
They said, "We are going to court." I hid.
They said, "You will live with your mother." I left.
They said, "But you can visit your father twice a month." I nodded.
They said. "We'll all be happier." I cried.
They said, "It's all for the best..." They lied.

# CHAPTER III

## ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

### Statement of General Goals

The following goals were projected for this practicum: 1) to gain administrative and parental acceptance to start a counseling program for children of divorce; 2) to establish a counseling program; and 3) to maintain the counseling program after its initial appearance.

The first goal had been achieved upon the acceptance of the Practicum Proposal. The second goal has also been completed. The description of its accomplishment provides the gist of this report which will be disseminated to other professionals. The third goal out of necessity will have to rely upon future events that might not be under this writer's control.

## Behavioral Expectations

The establishment of the counseling program attempted to accomplish the following four objectives:

1. To resolve the students' feelings of possible self-blame stemming from being the cause of the divorce as measured by a pre- and post-counseling structured questionnaire, impressions gathered by this writer as the child maintains good attendance, parent(s) comments, and teacher comments.

2. To help the students understand that others are experiencing similar feelings and situations as measured by a pre- and post-counseling structured questionnaire, impressions gathered by this writer as the child maintains good attendance, parent(s) comments, and teacher comments.

3. To help the students gain a realistic picture of divorce without the typical exaggerations and misconceptions as measured by a pre- and post-counseling structured questionnaire, impressions gathered by this writer as the child maintains good attendance, parent(s) comments, and teacher comments.

4. To assist the students in learning new ways of coping with feelings and situations as measured by a pre- and post-counseling structured questionnaire, impressions gathered by this writer as the child maintains good attendance, parent(s) comments, and teacher comments.

## Evaluation Instruments

Five systems of measurement were employed in this practicum. None employed hard statistical data. This has been a shortcoming of prior research as stated in the literature review. However, it is the hope of this writer that the limited scope of this practicum will eventually lead to a wider ranging follow-up study. The techniques of measurement included a pre- and post-counseling questionnaire completed by the children, clinical impressions, parent(s) comments, teacher comments, and attendance.

### The Questionnaire:

A questionnaire was formulated (see Appendix B) to assess the objectives of the counseling sessions, as well as to provide data for any individual follow-ups that became necessary. The questionnaire had been viewed by several teachers in the effort to insure comprehension by the participating young children. To avoid any readability problems, the questionnaire was administered in a group format at the first counseling session. Spaces were provided to check yes or no, as well as to answer question number one. This author administered the questions. The post-counseling administration was done on an individual basis after the final session for purposes of collecting individual comments that were not offered during the sessions, for debriefing about some of the activities, and as a check if the child needed any more support services.

### The Clinical Impressions:

Once having established a friendly group atmosphere to facilitate interpersonal exchanges, it was one of the writer's tasks to assess how each individual child was progressing as well as to evaluate how the group was functioning as a whole unit. Data on the students had already been

obtained from the parents and teachers. This information served as the starting point for the impressions. Summative opinions were also made to determine the future needs of the counseling program.

Parental Comments:

The parents were asked the following questions at the conclusion of the counseling program:

1. Do you think your child enjoyed the program?
2. Do you think your child benefitted from the program? How so?
3. Do you see any changes in your child's behavioral or social patterns?
4. Have new communication lines opened up between you and your child?
5. Has your child begun to ask you more questions?
6. Would you recommend that the program continue?
7. Do you have any suggestions on how to better the program?

It should be noted that some of these questions were difficult for the parents to answer in that the children were informed of the confidential and private nature of the group.

Teacher Comments:

Feedback from the teachers was sought to monitor behavioral, social, and academic changes. These comments were collected on an informal ongoing basis throughout the program.

Attendance:

Was monitored along with dropouts and new members (but no new members after week 2).

To reiterate, there was no hard statistical data. The results of the five evaluation techniques were gathered and examined for each individual child to assess whether or not the counseling sessions had any impact. The responses to the questionnaire were summarized for individuals and for the group as a whole. Again, the writer's main interest was to positively affect individuals within a group setting.

The criteria that were used to evaluate the success of the program in terms of its objectives were as follows:

1. All students will attend at least seven of the eight sessions.
2. On the pre- and post-counseling questionnaire, 90% of the students will show a 75% increase in their responses in a positive direction.
3. 75% of the parents will respond positively to the structured interview.
4. 75% of the involved teachers will note a positive behavior change in the counselees' classroom behavior.

# CHAPTER IV

# SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The first possible solution to the problem of the lack of counseling services was to do nothing at all. Obviously, this solution was palatable to no one.

A second solution was to create an exhaustive list of community services and private therapists that parents could access. This was not feasible because of placing extra financial pressures on families, because of putting the school system in the position of advertising for the private sector, and because of no existing system to identify those parents that might be interested.

A third solution was to individually meet with the children of divorce after they were identified by their teachers. This became impractical because of the time restraints placed upon the school psychologists.

Finally, after talking to other professionals, after reviewing the literature, and after evaluating the existing school district social systems, the writer decided to implement a group counseling approach.

## Description of Selected Solution

The group counseling program originated with acceptance by appropriate school administrators. Once this was accomplished, a recruitment letter (Appendix C) went home with each child in the school. Returns came to the writer's office. With a rough estimate of 100 children having experienced a parental divorce, a group was able to be formed. It was anticipated that those going through current crisis situations would enroll. Children of reconstituted families were also accepted. If returns were not forthcoming, several teachers had agreed to make follow-up telephone calls to the parents of children they knew to have been divorced. Permission was not granted for the writer to make direct parental contact because of confidentiality issues.

Upon obtaining the positive responses from the parents, each was contacted for a brief history and they received a verbal outline of the counseling program. Upon their approval, the writer then introduced himself to each prospective group member. The group then commenced on a weekly basis until its conclusion.

The group consisted of 10 students, grades 1-3. No child was denied services. Two prospective counselees were not admitted because of extenuating family circumstances. The sessions were mostly held on Monday afternoons (divorced children have usually just experienced a visitation weekend). They lasted between 25-45 minutes dependent upon the nature of the planned activities. The Piagetian approach referred to in the literature review was employed.

The writer led the groups and was an active participant, facilitator,

advisor, coordinator, evaluator, and mediator. Situational variables such as time and space reflected the schedules of the group members. Teacher cooperation was obtained as far as make up assignments. The children attended on a voluntary basis. Those who were having a particular academic problem that would be exacerbated by a particular group meeting were of course excused on an emergency basis. Siblings in the same school were accepted into the group. With a small sample (n=10), it was not possible to match for sex, grade levels, and family backgrounds.

Between group meetings, there were individual follow-ups and preparation time. Teachers were contacted and parents always had an open line to my office. Major problems or emotional upsets that occurred within the group were dealt with on an individual basis. This was not a therapy group. It involved more of a "rap session" approach, with discussion following a structured activity. Observers were not permitted within the meeting room. Friends of group members who had also experienced divorce were encouraged to attend.

Group rules included the following: a) confidentiality; b) good listening; c) taking turns; d) voluntary participation; and e) sharing with the other group members or the leader. No put-downs were allowed. Ongoing disciplinary problems were dealt with individually. However, if a member persisted in disrupting the group, he/she could be excluded. Parent participation occurred at the last session.

## Report of Action Taken

This section will describe in some detail the nature of the activities that transpired during the eight group sessions. A more simplified outline is provided for the reader in Appendix E. During the discussion of the activities, some anecdotes will be provided as examples of the ability of young children to state what is on their mind. Obviously, confidentiality will be maintained.

Group Composition:

Table 4: Group Members

| Student | School Progress | Grade | Sex | Home Situation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Good | 1 | F | Maternal custody;paternal visits pending hearing |
| B | Poor | 1 | F | Paternal custody;Maternal visits pending |
| C[3] | Poor | 1 | F | Legally separated; divorce to follow |
| D[3] | Good | 1 | F | Same as above |
| E | Poor | 2 | F | Double reconstituted family; joint custody |
| F | Good | 1 | M | Maternal remarriage; paternal visits every other weekend |
| G | Good | 2 | M | Paternal custody; no maternal contact |
| H | Good | 3 | M | Maternal custody;did not know father |
| I[1] | Good | 3 | F | Maternal custody;no paternal visits |
| J[2] | Good | 1 | F | Maternal custody;Paternal visits alternate holidays |

Notes: 1) Joined at session number 2; 2) moved away after session 4; and 3) C and D were sisters.

Note the various types of living arrangements. Note also that seven of the ten students were doing well in school. Furthermore, all three boys were described as being well adjusted. These factors will become very relevant in Chapter V.

Session I: (October 29, 1984)

The students independently left their classrooms at a prearranged time and came to the meeting room. The group rules were quickly reviewed as each child had had exposure to them via the personal introduction program with myself. Simple Simon was then played, both as an icebreaker, and as a good mechanism to demonstrate good listening skills.Name Tags was initiated as an unthreatening activity to allow each child to share bits of personal information. Each child had to write their name, and draw their favorite food and favorite person. Verbally, they then described their drawings. The pre- counseling questionnaire was then read to the students by the group leader as they individually checked off answers on separate sheets of paper. A short filmstrip entitled "When Two Divide" was then provided, but no discussion was demanded. Finally, the children received copies of "Divorce is a Grownup Problem" in a folder format to take home. Their homework assignment was to read the first one-half of the book with their parent(s). This was the longest session as it lasted a full 45 minutes. However, each individual activity was of short duration to maintain interest. Anecdote of the day: during the filmstrip, there was a scene of a loud argument with an abusive father-type figure. One student reported it sounded like her father. Another student asked if she had ever told him to shut up. The student said she was afraid. The second student said she should always express her feelings.

Session II:(November, 5)

It began with another simple self-disclosure activity via drawing of a favorite animal The members worked in two sub-groups to foster interactions. Each group shared their drawings and some students agreed to pantomime their efforts in a guessing game. The group then

composed feeling gauges which were essentially thermometers with five intervals. Having read the first half of the book, a discussion was begun on the feelings that the child in the book had experienced. These included mad, sad, happy, and scared. Each child drew one gauge to represent each one of the four feelings. They then filled in the gauges based upon the intensity of the feeling they felt when their parents first moved apart. Their homework was to complete reading the book. Anecdote of the day: "I felt happy when they moved apart because they couldn't fight anymore".

Session III: (November, 13)

We reopened the discussion of feelings and reached group consensus on colors to describe each feeling. As a full group. but allowing for interpersonal byplay, the children were asked to color in the line drawings of the child in the book dependent upon his mood. The members then saw a longer and more emotional filmstrip entitled "Must You Choose Sides". A discussion was then held revolving around the theme of children's rights and having a say in the matter of custody. Anecdote of the day: "I had to go to court, I was scared, and no one listened to me".

Session IV: (November, 19)

The school had been involved in heraldry projects within the Art program. This was extended into the group by the use of Personal Shields. On large sheets of oaktag, the students created four sections in a shield with the shape of their own choice. Within each section they had to depict one of the following: a good time with my family, a bad time with my family, why your parents got divorced, and what you would like to happen next year. Anecdote of the day: six students independently drew their parents back together in the fourth wish section.

Session V: (November, 26)

The members split into two teams to play the "Acting, Choosing, Feeling Game". This is a commercial board game where dice are thrown, pieces move across variously colored squares, and a winner is determined by reaching the end of the path. There were three decks of cards that were enhanced by my own cards that were more divorce-specific. Each team was represented by one piece which maintained its place on the board if a response of act, choose, or feel was forthcoming.Team members were allowed to assist in the sharing process. It was recognized beforehand by the group leader that this was a time consuming game and that it would not be completed in one session. Thus, the two teams would assuredly agree to a "tie". A homework assignment was given as each child was asked to prepare two questions to ask a divorced parent at the next session. Anecdote of the day: "My parents were good actors for awhile. I've got them figured out now though".

Session VI: (December, 3)

The group was visited by a divorced parent who spent 30 minutes fielding questions from the members. The questions were not screened beforehand, but our visitor was permitted an occasional "I don't know". The premise was to gain another perspective on divorce and there were brief occasions of role-playing incorporated into the visit. Anecdote of the day: One child persisted on sitting with physical contact with the guest. When asked why she said she felt sorry for the visitor and wanted to help her.

Session VII: (December, 10)

Each child drew a Kinetic Family Drawing and shared it with the group. These were chromatic drawings and each member had the complete freedom to include or exclude any family member from their drawings. Anecdote of the

day: "Do I have to put myself in the picture?"

Session VIII: (December, 17)

The parents had been invited to attend this session and in fact four did attend. Both parents and children worked together on feeling wheels to open a new line of communication at home. Along the outer edge of the wheel were feelings with a pointer attached to the middle. This would allow for a non-verbal way of showing emotions. The group members had brought in refreshments for a closing party, and while they were having a good time, the program was reviewed with the parents.

December 18-20:

Each member was administered the post-counseling questionnaire on an individual basis and was debriefed. Questions were answered and suggestions for other helping mechanisms were offered when necessary.

# CHAPTER V

## RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Results

This section will be keyed off of the evaluative criteria established on page 23.

Criterion 1: All students will attend at least seven of the eight sessions.

This criterion was reached. Of the eight students who were eligible to attend all sessions, five did so and the other three missed only one session. The student who moved after the fourth session had perfect attendance up to that point in time. The student who began at the second session attended all seven sessions for which she was eligible. In sum, out of a possible 75 appearances by the total number of students, 72 did in fact occur. This represents a 96% attendance rate.

Criterion 2: On the pre- and post-counseling questionnaire, 90% of the students will show a 75% increase in their responses in a positive direction.

Table 5: Pre- and Post-Counseling Questionnaire Comparisons

| Student | Positive Responses Pre- | Positive Responses Post- | Difference | % Increase |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 12 | 14 | +2 | 17 |
| B | 7 | 11 | +4 | 57 |
| C | 3 | 13 | +10 | 333 |
| D | 9 | 14 | +5 | 56 |
| E | 2 | 10 | +8 | 400 |
| F | 16 | 16 | 0 | 0 |
| G | 15 | 14 | —1 | 0 |
| H | 16 | 17 | +1 | 7 |
| I | 15 | 15 | 0 | 0 |
| J | 15 | N/A | N/A | N/A |

Six of the nine eligible students, or 67%, showed a change in a positive direction. This is well below the 90% criterion. Of those who showed an increase, two students (C and E) were above the 75% criterion. Two others (B and D) were close to the criterion. One student (G) actually showed a slight decrease. Two students demonstrated no change using the 17 scorable items on the questionnaire. In general, criterion 2 was not attained by this program.

Criterion 3: 75% of the parents will respond positively to the structured interview.

Attempts were made to reach as many parents as possible including custodial, noncustodial, and step parents. Fourteen "parents" were

eventually administered the interview. Of the 14, thirteen (13) responded in a positive direction. The one dissenter was a step parent who did not want his child in the group. Two parents could not be reached, and after receiving letters, they chose not to participate. The 93% rate of positive responses easily met criterion 3.

Criterion 4: 75% of the involved teachers will note a positive behavior change in the counselees' classroom behavior.

This was evaluated in an informal manner. There was really no chance of reaching the criterion, since only three of the students were originally rated as doing poorly in school. However, as described by the teachers, two of the three did show at least temporary classroom improvements for the duration of the group counseling sessions.

## Conclusions

This section will provide a discussion of the previously aforementioned results as well as this writer's overall clinical judgements about the program.

The group members did maintain an excellent attendance rate. They all understood the serious nature of the program, but were also willing and able to have a "play time" while dealing with the important issues at hand. In many ways the first through third graders' naivete was one of the keys to the program. They were uninhibited, not easily embarrassed, and expressed themselves through the accompanying activities. The level of the activities was in fact appropriate and were imperative to avoid a strict reliance upon the youngsters' emerging language skills.

The composition of the group was less than ideal. There was an overabundance of females and first graders. This led to the small problem of students not wanting to share with each other, but rather with the group leader. This usually had to occur during the preparation time to return to class. Nevertheless, everyone did have a chance to share with someone, and they genuinely accepted their various roles within the group processes. Two leaders (both third graders) did emerge and were able to keep the group on an even keel under the direction of the leader.

As stated before, criterion number 2 was not reached in terms of increasing positive responses on the pre- and post-counseling questionnaire. The main reason for this occurrence was the voluntary nature of the group. These students (with the support of the parents)

had long been encouraged to do the right things in helping themselves deal with the parental divorce. Thus, why not enroll in one more appropriate activity. The fact that seven of the ten members, and all three boys, were rated as being well adjusted in school points to a lacking of identification of those students who were in fact having adverse school adjustments because of the parental divorce.

The small sample size makes it very difficult to compare these members to the descriptions that research provides on the children of divorce. The notion of boys adjusting more poorly was certainly not borne out here. What was corroborated, however, was the idea of the many variables of the pre- and post-divorce environments having equally variable effects on the children. Despite the small sample size, the differences in living arrangements resulted in many more group contributions than were originally expected.

The informal data gathered from both the teachers and parents was favorable and should provide incentive for a continuation and eventual expansion of counseling services. Regardless of reaching the various criteria, the group was successful simply because it in fact did occur. A new service was provided for the first time, there were no major negative ramifications, costs were very low, time commitments were reasonable, and a group of children had the experience of testing new waters within a strong academic setting. Seeds were planted for a school system to begin to recognize that children can also be disabled by life experiences as well as by academic lags. Some legitimacy was gained for the provision of services for new groups of children who do not necessarily qualify for special education placements. This Practicum without a doubt put school personnel on

notice that family problems do in fact affect child development and academic progress.

From a professional School Psychology point of view, this project assuredly assisted in a role expansion heretofore not recognized. There are implications here for changing of job descriptions, skill development, use of consultant models, and good public relations. School psychologists should have time available to work with divorcing families in the effort to insure that parenting skills can allow for children's good school adjustments. Group counseling can be conducted successfully within an elementary school setting. This was demonstrated by this particular Practicum. Hopefully, it will also provide others with the techniques and encouragement to plant their own seeds for the expansion of affective education programs.

## Recommendations

1. Conduct a second group using the teachers as recruiters. They can more easily identify those children who are both having problems in school and who are from a divorcing family.

2. Link up with other professionals who are conducting groups in an effort to eventually develop divorce-specific standardized assessment procedures. These procedures should make use of teacher expertise, parental knowledge, and children's perceptions.

3. Ongoing divorce-specific groups can be considered. Central office staff should become involved as new families register their children within the school district. These staff members could serve as advertisers for the service.

4. In-service teacher education programs should be conducted to provide age-appropriate management techniques for children of divorce.

5. Efforts should be made to extend the knowledge that divorce does result in short-term problems for children, but long-term effects can often be positive ones if support services are provided.

6. School administrators should be made aware of both the psychological effects of divorce as well as of the legal aspects that cover student and parent rights.

## Dissemination

Options for dissemination include:

1. Abstracts to all Cluster XV members.

2. Nova University nerworking through Communicator and Summer Institute.

3. Presentation to local parent group. Contact with Parents Without Partners. Contact with local private clinicians.

4. Possible presentation to local, state, and/or national school psychologist associations.

5. Make copies available to the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education.

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# APPENDIX A

## SURVEY TO ESTABLISH COUNSELING SERVICES

March, 1984

Dear Professional:

The Instructional Council of the Merrytown-Energyville Regional School District is currently investigating the issue of meeting the emotional needs of the students enrolled in grades K-6. In order to assist in this effort, we are asking you to complete the following survey by April 1, 1984 and return it to Alan Goldstein, School Psychologist.

Your cooperation in this matter is essential for the completion of this project, for the establishment of a "real" need for any counseling services and for determining if any additional supportive personnel is necessary.

Sincerely,

Instructional Council

SURVEY

PART I

Instructions:

Think of those children in your classes who you believe would strongly benefit from counseling services. Please limit yourselves to those students who are high priorities. Do not use student names. Identify each student with a letter, A through E. Below you see a list of observable behavior problems, student letters A-E, and a grid. For each student that you identify, place a check in the appropriate box indicating the behavior or behaviors that is (are) manifested by the student that you feel should warrant counseling interventions. For example: if student A is frequently sent to the principal and is lazy, the grid would appear as follows:

1. Sent to principal
2. Verbally aggressive to teachers and peers
3. Disrespectful of property rights
4. Tattles
5. Lazy

| | A | B |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | X | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | X | |

You can include more than one behavior per student.

Observable Behavior Problems:

| | Students: | A | B | C | D | E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Is sent to the principal for discipline | | | | | |
| 2. | Is verbally aggressive to teachers or peers | | | | | |
| 3. | Is disrespectful of others' property rights | | | | | |
| 4. | Tattles on classmates | | | | | |
| 5. | Is lazy | | | | | |
| 6. | Lacks motivation and interest | | | | | |
| 7. | Disrupts the classroom | | | | | |
| 8. | Argues with teachers and classmates | | | | | |
| 9. | Doesn't follow directions | | | | | |
| 10. | Steals | | | | | |
| 11. | Has poor hygiene habits | | | | | |
| 12. | Is kept in from recess or specials | | | | | |
| 13. | Says that other children don't like him/her | | | | | |
| 14. | Can't seem to concentrate | | | | | |
| 15. | Pouts, whines | | | | | |
| 16. | Is overactive | | | | | |
| 17. | Is an academic underachiever | | | | | |
| 18. | Bullies other children | | | | | |
| 19. | Is self-centered | | | | | |
| 20. | Does not do homework assignments | | | | | |
| 21. | Is kept after school | | | | | |
| 22. | Is avoided by other students | | | | | |
| 23. | Daydreams | | | | | |
| 24. | Has unacceptable personal habits | | | | | |
| 25. | Swears in class | | | | | |
| 26. | Has nervous habits | | | | | |
| 27. | Has no friends among classmates | | | | | |
| 28. | Cheats | | | | | |
| 29. | Lies to avoid punishment or responsibility | | | | | |
| 30. | Doesn't follow class rules | | | | | |

Behaviors taken from Behavior Rating Profile, by L. Brown and D. Hammill, Pro-Ed., 1978.

Comments:

PART II

Instructions:

For each of the individual students (A-E) you described in Part I, try, as best as possible, to identify a cause for the behaviors you have observed. Try not to overlap these categories and identify only one cause for the problem behavior(s).

Probable Causes of Behavior:

| | Students: A | B | C | D | E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Sibling Rivalry | | | | | |
| 2. Illness or death of family member | | | | | |
| 3. Adjustment to foster home | | | | | |
| 4. Lack of educational stimulation at home | | | | | |
| 5. Unemployment (financial) problems | | | | | |
| 6. Parental pressure | | | | | |
| 7. Overprotected by parents | | | | | |
| 8. Health problems | | | | | |
| 9. Divorce related problems | | | | | |
| 10. Parent rejection | | | | | |
| 11. Only child | | | | | |
| 12. Recently moved | | | | | |
| 13. Parent in jail | | | | | |
| 14. New addition to family | | | | | |
| 15. Both parents working (lack of supervision) | | | | | |
| 16. Educational handicap | | | | | |
| 17. Not sure | | | | | |
| 18. Other (please describe)_____ | | | | | |

_____

_____

# APPENDIX B

## PRE- AND POST- COUNSELING QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

1. How long have your parents been divorced?
2. Do you know why your parents were divorced?
3. Do you think it was a good idea for your parents to get a divorce?
4. Do you think your parents will remarry?
5. Do you blame yourself for the divorce?
6. Do you think about your parents getting back together?
7. Do you want to know more about divorce?
8. Do you feel angry about the divorce?
9. Can you talk to your mom and dad about the divorce?
10. Do you often feel sad?
11. Can you call the parent you are not living with whenever you want?
12. Do your mom and dad talk to each other?
13. Have you talked to a friend about the divorce?
14. Have you talked to a teacher about the divorce?
15. Do kids whose parents still live together understand you?
16. Does the divorce make it hard to concentrate in school?
17. Would you like to see the parent you are not living with more often?
18. Do you know other kids whose parents are divorced?

# APPENDIX C

## LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

My recent experiences at Chalk Hills School have revealed that a substantial number of children have recently experienced or about to go through, a parental divorce. Children in these situations often have difficulty adjusting to these changes and coping with their feelings can be a slow and painful procedure. These changes are also adversely affecting school performances.

I am planning a group rap session approach to hopefully assist the students make a suitable adjustment to changes in the home. The group would meet once a week for approximately eight weeks during the school day and will consist of small groups of students. The goals of the group are as follows:

1. To resolve the student's feeling of possible self-blame, stemming from being the cause of the divorce.
2. To help the students understand that others are experiencing similar feelings and stuations.
3. To help the students gain a realistic picture of divorce without the typical exaggerations and misconceptions.
4. To assist the students in learning new ways of coping with feelings and situations.

If your family has recently gone through a divorce,or are about to do so, and you feel that your child could benefit from such a group, please fill out and return the form below to me as soon as possible. After I receive a sufficient number of returns to fill the group, I will contact you for an appointment. At that time, I will describe to you the goals content, format, and mechanics of the group and attempt to respond to any questions that you might have. Thank you for your support of this program.

Sincerely,

Alan Goldstein

Alan Goldstein
School Psychologist
123-4567 ext. 123

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Please return to me directly at the Main Street School or via the Chalk Hills Main Office.

First Child's Name_____
Second Child's Name if also at Chalk Hills_____
Child's grade_____ Child's Teacher_____

Parent or Guardian Name (s)_____
Parent or Guardian Phone Number - Home_____Work_____

# APPENDIX D

## SIXTH WEEK FOLLOW UP LETTER

Dear Parent(s) and Guardian (s):

Our divorce group rap sessions at Chalk Hills School have been moving along smoothly. We have now completed six of the originally scheduled eight meetings. The children have experienced a variety of activities that hopefully have contributed positively to their overall development. There are two more meetings planned, one for _____ and the final one on _____.

I have been thinking about how to have some parental involvement in the program that goes beyond the support you have already been giving your children. What I have decided to do is to make the last session a joint one, with both parent(s ) and children attending together to accomplish the following:

1. I will give a brief review of the activities that have been completed;
2. I will in general discuss the progress of the group;
3. You will experience a communication activity with your child(ren) that you can later discuss at home;
4. Refreshments and a pleasant "goodbye".

This session is scheduled for _____at _____P.M. at Chalk Mills School. You are all cordially invited to attend. I am fully aware that there are working parents amongst you. I am hoping that I have given you enough notice so that you can make any necessary arrangements. Please keep in mind that if you are not able to attend, that this will in no way diminish my respect for you nor your child(ren)'s good feelings about the program. I am looking forward to seeing you there. If you have any specific questions regarding your child(ren)'s progress within the group, I am as always, available at 123-4567, extension 123. However, please keep in mind the "private nature" of the group when asking your questions. If I had any major concerns, you will already have heard from me. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alan Goldstein

Alan Goldstein
School Psychologist

P.S.: It would be most helpful if you called to let me know if you can attend.

# APPENDIX E

## SUMMARY OF GROUP ACTIVITIES

## Summary of Group Activities

Week 1:

a. Reviewed group rules
b. Name Tags. This was a way to introduce each other. We shared our names, favorite foods and favorite people in a drawing.
c Filled out questionnaire on divorce
d. Saw filmstrip "When Two Divide"
e. Gave out and explained the book "Divorce is a Grownup Problem"

Week 2:

a. Self-disclosure activity. Draw your favorite animal.
b. Made feeling gauges based upon the first half of the book. Feelings discussed were mad, sad, happy, and scared. Thermometer type gauges were filled up based upon how the children felt when their parents first moved apart.

Week 3

a. Colored in the face of the child in the book with color dependent upon the feeling.
b. Saw filmstrip "Must You Choose Sides"

Week 4:

a. Made personal shields with four sections of drawings including a good time with my family, a bad time with my family, why my parents got divorced, and what you would like to happen next year.

Week 5:

a. Played Acting, Choosing, Feeling Game. This was a board game with two teams having to respond to emotionally laden questions that were on cards.

Week 6:

a. Visit from a divorced parent who responded openly to the children's questions.

Week 7:

a. Drew pictures of our families engaged in an activity.

Week 8:

a. Parents attended
b. Reviewed the program with parents
c. Made feeling wheels to take home as a communication device
d. Refreshments